

# critical digest

505 FIFTH AVENUE, N. Y. 17, N. Y.  
MU 2-0326 T. M. KRAUS

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## New York Theatre Diary

Sing Till Tomorrow- Royale 12/28/53. Dorothy Natter presents a new play by Jean Lowenthal about a corner druggist in a large American city. John Marley, Michael Sheehan and Ted Campbell are featured in cast directed by Basil Langdon...In The Summer House. Playhouse 12/29/53. Playwrights Company presents a new play by Jane Bowles starring Judith Anderson. Plot concerns two widows, each with a neurotic daughter. Mildred Dunnock, Elizabeth Ross, and Logan Ramsey are featured in cast directed by Jose Quintero...The Remarkable Mr. Pennypacker- Coronet 12/30/53. Producers Theatre, Inc., first production presents a new comedy by Liam O'Brien. Burgess Meredith stars as a liberal Victorian parent. Supporting cast includes Martha Scott, Una Merkel, Glenn Anders. Directed by Alan Schneider. This is first production of new group headed by Robert Whitehead, Roger Stevens and Robert Dowling...Both Yesterday- President 12/31/53. Negro Drama Group production starring Edna Mae Robinson and Powell Lindsay. postponed from last week. Two week run.

## Lee Shubert Dies

The president of the Shubert Theatrical Enterprises and owner of 18 NYC theatres died Christmas day at Mount Sinai Hospital, NY, of a circulatory ailment at age 78. Mr. Lee, together with his brother Jake, amassed a theatrical fortune estimated between \$300 million and \$600 million. In association with others he produced more than 500 plays. The Starcross Story, which opens Jan 13, will bear the credit line "produced by Lee and J.J. Shubert in association with John Wilson and S S Kreliberg." His countless fights with other producers and critics through the years are Broadway legend. Touring companies of Shubert productions of The Student Prince and other operettas gave employment to hundreds for many years.

## Current Theatre Reviews

Dead Pidgeon- Vanderbilt 12/23/53. News and Journal American reviewers filed mild pro votes for Lenard Kantor's new three character play featuring Joan Larring, James Gregory and Lloyd Bridges. Chapman, News, rated the Christmas week entry as an excellent piece of theatrical fiction. McClain, Journal American, found it a diverting and entirely authentic little melodrama, written with humor and occasional brilliance, acted superlatively. Majority of critics disagreed. They found acting well done, but thought Kantor's script routine and talky. Atkinson, Times, stated author is a thoroughly routine writer. Kerr, Herald Tribune, tabbed it taut and tiresome.

Charley's Aunt- City Center 12/22/53-1/5/6. Jose Ferrer's fourth and final presentation garnered a set of mild notices for the 1890 Brandon Thomas farce and a set of personal thank yous from the critics to the actor-director-producer. Atkinson, Times, suggests Grover Whalen present Ferrer with an official carnation on-stage. Coleman, Mirror, is surprised the star had enough physical energy left for this frolic. Watts, Post, noted that in spite of some critical quibbles it has been good to see him. Chapman, News, who found the final proceedings only intermittently amusing, concluded by stating that some other scheme for making productions of real distinction must be evolved if the City Center is going to hold to its original high purpose.

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' Off- Broadway '

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Madam Will You Walk Continues at Phoenix to Jan 10, when it will be followed by Coriolanus starring Robert Ryan. Plans for The Golden Apple, Houghton and Hambelton third production, are held up until a director has been chosen to stage the Jerome Morose and John LaTouche musical.

Circle in Square is offering \$1 student rate to Saturday matinees of American Gothic...Ken Parker's new farce A Cat Has Nine is presented Friday through Sunday evenings at Royal Playhouse 83 E4, with his drama The Wedding Present playing Tuesday through Thursdays.

Dobbs Ferry, NY, Playhouse, which just finished 60 weeks of continuous presentations, has closed for a vacation for its staff until mid-January.

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' Vaudeville '

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Holiday stage show at Palace includes Syd and Jack Slate, Roy Bensen, Rita Constance, The Colbergs, Jones and Wilbert.

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' Yiddish Theatre '

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Maurice Schwartz will produce and star in an English version of Let's Change Places, a Sholom Aleichem comedy, at President Jan 14. Group is planning a tour of South Africa in 1954...Habima Haktana presented 2 performances of On the Plains of the Negev at 314 W 91.

Struggle for the Negev, Yiddish drama presented by the Folksbine, 128 Stanton, recommended by Rosenberg, Post. Directed by Avraham Ninio, of Israel's Habima Theatre, the cast gives a performance that would do credit to a Broadway production. Play, which is packed with pathos and humor, is good theatre, critic notes, even for those who do not understand Yiddish.

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' Children's Theatre '

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Holiday performances for moppets include Junior Theatre's Saturday production of The Five Little Peppers and Little Men (Carnegie Recital Hall), Christmas Festival, produced by Play-Mart Sat & Sun at Carl Fisher Hall, Saturday at 3, plus St. George and Dragon, produced at Henry St. Playhouse. Little Riding Hood and Toy Show, produced by Children's Own Theatre at Met. Duane Church, Greenwich Village.

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' Theatre TV Notes '

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Howard Lindsay discusses "The State of the American Theatre" on ABC TV At Issue Dec 30 at 8 PM EST...John Golden new composition "New York Town" will debut on NBC Radio Cities Service Band Dec 23 at 9 30 PM...NBC Radio Railroad hour will feature a salute to Otto Harbach...CBS Radio Stage-Struck switches to Sun at 5 PM EST...NBC TV production of Robert Sherwood's original TV play "The Backbone of America", will be seen Dec 29 at 8 PM EST. Thomas Mitchell has replaced James Dunn in cast.

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' Broadway TV Theatre '

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Thirteenth Chair, Bayard Veiller's 1916 thriller, will be presented on WOR TV Broadway TV Theatre Dec 28-Jan. Claire Luce will be featured in role originated by Margaret Wycherly. Drama opened on Nov 20, 1916 at 43th St Theatre and played 328 performances. Since it has been a little theatre favorite. Most of critics found it absorbing melodrama, beautifully acted. Broun, Tribune, billed it as 12 1/2 times as good as author's previous Within the Law. Times and Post critics panned it as somewhat incoherent after an interesting first act.

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' Review Reports '

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Analysis of NYC daily, weekly reviews. Theatre, films, LP records. \$1 per back title. Send check, money order.

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 ' Green Room Department '   
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**KIND NY...**NY audiences and critics show a regard for players,playwrights and producers that makes for a more pleasant, if less exciting, relationship than audiences of the past, praises Coleman, Mirror. NY critics are remarkably kind and conservative nowadays,Mirror aisle-sitter believes. They shun personal comment for what is called " constructive criticism.

**COLUMN TIPS...**The analyst of a Broadway star is busy because the star doesn't think he deserves the money he is earning in a current hit, reveals Eaton...Virginia Gilmore may replace Mary Martin in Kind Sir if hit continues past May, hears Gardner...Can-Can understudies battling for position on "sick nights" reports Farrell.

**O'NEILL OBITS...**O'Neill was not only a great playwright, points out Watts,Post, but he was a very delightful man. Critic met him at Tours in 1930 and feels that not enough has been said of his simplicity,his great personal humor, his fondness of chatting with friends, and his interest in and knowledge of sports... An Eugene O'Neill Theatre, which may well be the name of Robert Dowling-City Investing Company's new theatre, will be a fine monument to the playwright, applauds Chapman,News. A better monument, he adds, would be a new dramatist who will have the great man's vigor, passion and sense of event. What is needed is a man who can give the American theatre the new start it needs.

**CRITICAL THOUGHTS...**NY critics may not be gentler on actors than they used to be,but Morehouse, World Telegram & Sun, seldom finds a word of condemnation for players in Benchley's drama reviews...Producer who claims he cannot do a certain play because he cannot find the right cast has very little imagination, pans Coleman, Mirror.

**BARD'S BESTS...**Favorite Shakespearean performances recalled by Morehouse, WT&S include Ralph Richardson-Falstaff, Joyce Redman-Doll Tearsheet, Baliol Holloway-Iago, Uta Hagen-Desemona, Katharine Hepburn-Rosalind, George Arliss-Shylock, and both Ethel Barrymore and Maude Adams as Portia.

**INTERVIEW HI-LITES...**Some of the straight-lines thrown from the audience at Victor Borge's Comedy in Music are provided by thebehind-the-scenes stand by orchestra the union rules require the star to hire, he told Ross, Herald Tribune. Borge insists though that the orchestra men have nothing to do with the coughing during his "Clair de Lune" number.

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 ' Pros & Cons by TMK '   
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 ' "CD" Gift Coupon '   
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The success of the City Center program of drama through the years, plus the public's ready acceptance of the new Phoenix project at 12th St and 2nd Avenue should, but probably will not, prove a lesson to Broadway producers and workers. Both houses, thanks to union and staff concessions, play at so-called "popular" prices. Both aim, at least, in putting on "non-commercial" productions. Call it "subsidy", "concession", "foundation funds" etc, some way must be found to present such programs on a regular basis. Theatre fans and theatre workers would both benefit.

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College ,community and high school theatre leaders will hold their annual convention of the American Educational Theatre Association this week at New York's Hotel Statler. Highlights of the 3 day meeting include a demonstration performance of a play staged by Samuel Selden, University of North Carolina, plus talks by Moss Hart, John Gassner, Donald Oenslager, George Freedley and many,many others. Perhaps one of the most interesting will be that given by "an unknown playwright" on "On the Outside Looking In."

### Plays

Dial M For Murder and Wonderful Town resumed production after Christmas vacations...Late Love will close Jan 2 after 95 performances...This week, Dec 28-Jan 2, has been chosen for the annual Actors Fund Campaign. Appeals will be made in theatres, both in NY and throughout the country, by theatre owners, producers, directors, actors, stage-hands and critics...Dramatists Guild and the League of NY Theatres expect to conclude a new 5 year pact in January...Mark down Oct 21, 1954 as the NY opening of Silk Stockings, the new Cy Feuer and Ernie Martin musical which will star Don Ameche and Hildegard Neff.

### People

Josh Logan is back in NY and is recovering nicely from his recent illness. Plans are already underway for him to direct the new musical Fanny, which he and S.N. Behrman are writing for Mary Martin and Ezio Pinza...Judy Holliday may succeed Rosalind Russell in Wonderful Town, when the latter leaves to make a film in June...Equity's annual grim report on member's average salaries reveal that its 6000 members earned an average of \$800 during the last year. While the average number of weeks worked is 9½. Almost 1000 actors earned more than \$3500 in the past year. As the survey points out "Equity members, unless they are millionaires or crazy, work also in radio, TV, films, vaudeville, opera, night clubs, ballet and non-theatrical jobs."

### Other Broadways

Kismet and Teahouse of the August Moon will be presented in London soon by Rodgers and Hammerstein...An unsigned 17th Century manuscript of a group of short plays found in Belgium is believed to be by Moliere...Emile Littler's 13 For Dinner folded after 1 performance in London...A California little theatre director was killed in an accident on a gallows he built for his play...Washington, in the form of St. John Terrell, Lambertville, NJ, Music Circus producer, crossed the Delaware on Christmas night. The only ice reported by group re-enacting historical event was in their drinks.

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